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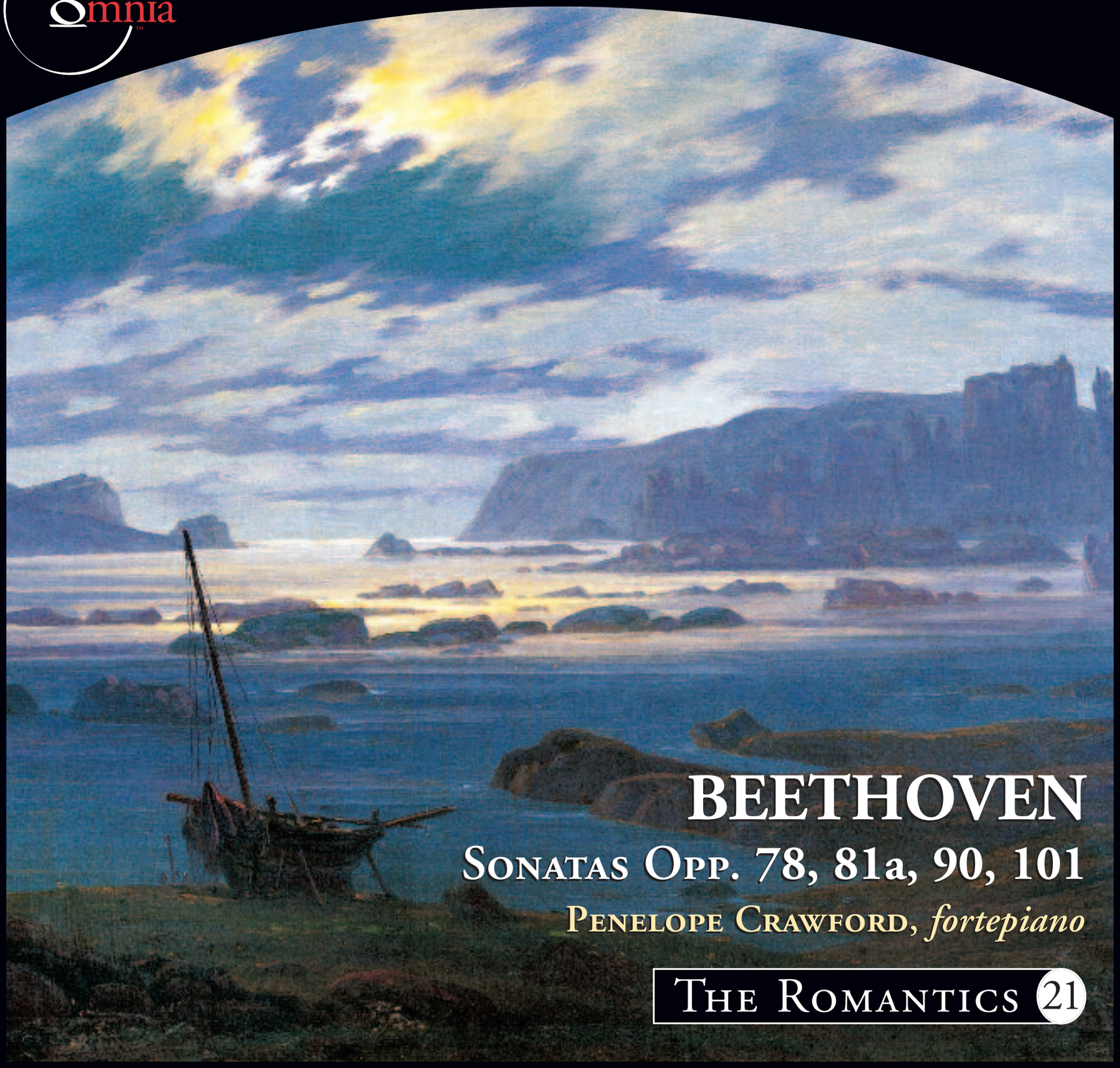

BEETHOVEN

Sonatas Opp. 78, 81a, 90, 101

Penelope Crawford, *fortepiano*

The Romantics 21

Ludwig van BEETHOVEN

Piano Sonatas Opp. 78, 81a, 90, 101

Penelope Crawford

fortepiano

(Conrad Graf, Wien, 1835)

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

Sonata no. 25 in F sharp major, op. 78

1 *Adagio cantabile – Allegro ma non troppo* ..... *6'54*

2 *Allegro vivace* ..... *3'15*

Sonata no. 26 in E flat major, op. 81a "Les Adieux"

3 *Adagio – Allegro* ..... *7'23*

4 *Andante espressivo – Vivacissimamente* ..... *10'07*

Sonata no. 27 in E minor, op. 90

5 *Mit lebhaftigkeit und durchaus mit Empfindung und Ausdruck* ..... *5'58*

6 *Nicht zu geschwind und sehr singbar vorgetragen* ..... *8'01*

Sonata no. 28 in A major, op. 101

7 *Etwas lebhaft, und mit der innigsten Empfindung* ..... *3'24*

8 *Lebhaft. Marschmässig* ..... *6'13*

9 *Langsam und sehnsuchtsvoll –* ..... *10'50*
Geschwind, doch nicht zu sehr; und mit Entschlossenheit

Total Time: 62'08

Penelope Crawford

Internationally acclaimed as one of America's master performers on historical keyboard instruments, **Penelope Crawford** has appeared as soloist with modern and period instrument orchestras, and as recitalist and chamber musician on major North American concert series. From 1975 to 1990 she was harpsichordist and fortepianist with the Ars Musica Baroque Orchestra, one of the first period instrument ensembles in North America. Her recordings, which have appeared on the Timegate, Titanic, Wild Boar, Loft, and Musica Omnia labels, include major chamber works of Beethoven, Schubert, Mendelssohn and Schumann with the Atlantis Trio, the Mozart and Beethoven fortepiano and wind quintets with the Cambini Winds, and Schubert's two major Lieder cycles, *die schöne Müllerin* and *Winterreise* with baritone Max van Egmond. Her recording of Beethoven's last three piano sonatas won the 2011 "Record of the Year Award" from Music Web International.

In addition to teaching a doctoral seminar in 18th- and 19th- century piano performance practices at the University of Michigan, Ms. Crawford served for twenty-five years on the artist faculty of the Oberlin Baroque Performance Institute. She has been involved as Artistic Director and performer in several important international conferences: *Händel's Messiah: History & Performance* (1980 Ann Arbor) *Michigan MozartFest* (1989, Ann Arbor); *Schubert's Piano Music* (1995, Washington D. C.); and *Beyond Notation: The Performance and Pedagogy of Improvisation in Mozart's Music* (2002, Ann Arbor). Crawford's performance degrees came from the Eastman School of Music and the University of Michigan, with additional studies in Salzburg and Rome. Her teachers have included Cécile Genhart, Rosina Lhevinne, Guido Agosti, Kurt Neumüller and Gyorgy Sandor.

Piano Sonatas Opp. 78, 81a, 90 & 101 and the emergence of Beethoven's late style

Beethoven began his sequence of piano sonatas as early as 1796: indeed his emergence onto the musical scene of Vienna was based on a rapidly-increasing fame as an exponent of the still relatively new fortepiano, of which the Viennese could already boast the most significant builders. Beethoven's initial fame was as an improviser without equal, but his own formal compositional development and the progress of the sonata concept as a whole can be best understood through the cycle of 32 piano sonatas composed between 1796 and 1824, which transformed the genre, witnessed and perhaps drove the expansion of the fortepiano from a five-octave instrument of fairly modest power and dynamic range to a six-and-a-half octave medium of considerably greater volume and strength.

The four sonatas that comprise this CD, all pivotal and important works, were composed against the backdrop of Napoleonic wars and their final resolution that resulted in Metternich's Congress of Vienna, convened in order to decide the fate of Europe, its population and its displaced aristocrats. In the wake of Napoleon's defeat, this grand meeting of all the aristocrats who had a bone to pick with Napoleon and wanted their thrones back led to a reactionary and oppressive police state in Vienna itself, with which both Beethoven and his younger contemporary, Schubert, would find themselves at odds – in Schubert's case with alarming and personally threatening consequences. The principal musical catalyst for the emerging style that resulted in these four sonatas was the success of Beethoven's famous public concert (or "Akademie") of 1808, which saw the unveiling of the fifth and sixth symphonies and the lyrical fourth piano concerto all of which, in their various ways, broke their respective moulds. The

first decade of the 19th century parallels perhaps the greatest artistic transformation experienced by any single composer, while the years 1809 – 1810 carry us right to the doorstep of Beethoven's so-called "late" style, first fully expressed through the A major sonata, op. 101, of which more will be said later.

It was Beethoven's career as a concertizing pianist that provided the impetus for his exploration, development and ultimate expansion of the well-defined sonata form that he inherited from Mozart and Haydn. In Beethoven's hands the piano sonata becomes a kind of compositional laboratory, clearly and most directly revealing his developing musical thought and working process. The thirty-two piano sonatas, composed at fairly regular intervals between 1796 and 1824 provide a birds-eye view of how Beethoven adopted a much-used and exploited genre, honored his inheritance, adapted and expanded it, and then transformed it beyond recognition. Taken as a cycle they encompass most of Beethoven's professional life as a composer and display in the most immediate and intimate way the unique path he chose, both in his exploration of form and also the exploitation of cutting-edge instrumental sonority, reflected in the many innovations in piano building.

The development of the piano sonata is analogous to Beethoven's contributions to other major genres: symphony, concerto and string quartet, but the transformation of piano technique required to perform his middle and late sonatas is without parallel; after all, the piano was his main instrument. With the piano we truly observe Beethoven in his element, for it was as a pianist and especially as an improviser without peer that he first dazzled the Viennese, a public which he held in something resembling amused contempt for the thirty-odd years during which he lived in the city. In the 1790s, Beethoven played on five- to-five-and-a-half octave pianos by Johann Andreas Stein and Anton Walter, as well as by Stein's daughter, Nanette Streicher, whose own son Johann Baptist later (in 1824) became the sole owner of the business she had inherited from her father in 1792. In 1803 Beethoven received a fortepiano from the French firm of Erard, which for a brief time appears to have pleased him with its increased power and range, although he made several efforts to have its action lightened. 1810 he wrote to Nanette Streicher requesting a new instrument to replace it, describing the Erard as "now quite useless". By 1818 he had taken delivery of an English fortepiano by the firm of John Broadwood & Sons (with a more sonorous middle and bass register, but a heavier action and duller treble than the Viennese instruments he was used to), and ultimately (by 1824) he had received (whether on loan or as a gift is unclear) one of the experimental instruments by Conrad Graf, with quadruple, rather than triple stringing in the treble, perhaps to increase its power. (Graf made a number of these in the 1820s). By 1824 Beethoven, whose hearing had been in decline since 1800 or so, would have been hard put to hear any piano.

With the *Waldstein* and *Appassionata* sonatas (nos. 21 & 23), it is clear that Beethoven has taken the genre in a very different direction from his predecessors: the works are longer, more complex, louder and denser than anything composed before them. Like the *Eroica* symphony and the third and fourth piano concertos these sonatas feature longer themes, much more extended developments, and key relationships that had never been used before, moving them far beyond the essential tonic-dominant tonal

plan of most Classical music. Music in Beethoven's hands became bigger, longer, louder and more complex. Though he had become disenchanted with his Erard piano by 1810, it was this instrument, with its increased range and power that inspired the composition of opp. 53 & 57.

It is the next four sonatas that are the subject of the present CD: no. 24, op 78 in F-sharp major; no 26, op. 81a in E-flat major, (*Les Adieux*); no. 27, op. 90 in E minor and no. 28, op. 101 in A major.

Sonata in F sharp major, op. 78

Of the sonata op. 78, Donald Francis Tovey (1931) wrote:

> *Beethoven was quite in earnest when he said he preferred this sonata to the C# minor, op. 27, No. 2 ["Moonlight"]. It is a complete contrast to that earlier work, not only in mood but in qualities that foreshadow Beethoven's 3rd period and lie completely beyond the scope of the works that led to his second period.*

On the basic level of tonality op. 78's exploration of the difficult key of F sharp major is also unprecedented: the key was rarely used in the early 1800s. Perhaps underlining its brevity, the first movement is provided with repeat signs for both exposition and development/recapitulation sections. As Tovey remarks, the repeat should be played as "the movement is short, and the stress on its formal aspects is a positive aesthetic gain." The end of the movement comes as a surprise, the usually slow harmonic rhythm of the classical period seeming to telescope into an end that appears with unexpected suddenness.

The second movement, faster and livelier than the first, and sounding from the outset like an afterthought or extension of it, experiments with form: either it is cast in sonata form-minus-development, or (as Tovey puts it) a special rondo form. In any case op. 78 foreshadows the kind of conciseness that Beethoven would come to display in

some of his final sonatas. It also juxtaposes parallel major/minor tonalities, foreshadowing Schubert's exploitation of the same effects in the 1820s.

Sonata in E flat major, op. 81a *(Les Adieux):*

One of Beethoven's closest and most enduring relationships was with the young Archduke Rudolph, who became the composer's student at the age of 16. Like the *Eroica* symphony, this sonata owes its existence in part to the disruptive and turbulent later career of Napoleon Bonaparte who, by 1809 in Beethoven's eyes (and those of most of Europe) had morphed from idealistic revolutionary into menacing military adventurer/tyrant with imperial pretensions that would plunge Europe into chaos. Napoleon's unilateral assumption of the imperial crown had earned Beethoven's contempt back in 1805, and resulted in the withdrawal of the composer's intended dedication of the *Eroica* to him.

By 1809 the French were once more at the gates of Vienna, having overcome an intense military campaign launched by Vienna's aristocrats to forestall a repeat of the disaster of four years prior. However, after defeats inflicted on the Austrian forces along the Danube, including the disastrous rout of the Austrians at Wagram, where the Austrians sustained over 50,000 casualties, the French this time laid siege to the city and caused general alarm and panic among the population, including Beethoven and his former teacher Haydn, who was now on his death bed. Beethoven took refuge in the basement of his brother Carl's house, placing pillows over his ears in a vain attempt to stifle the noise and preserve what remained of his hearing.

Meanwhile the royal family, including Archduke Rudolph (whose brother was in charge of the military defense of the city) fled Vienna in May, along with much of the ruling class, leaving the general population to fend for itself until November, when a

hastily-arranged peace treaty ended the siege and led to French withdrawal, leaving the infrastructure of parts of the city damaged and the population traumatized. Archduke Rudolph, eight years Beethoven's junior, was no ordinary aristocratic dilettante musician. Had it not been for his social position he might have made a career as a professional pianist. Beethoven's high regard for him was reflected in the larger number of dedications made to him than to any other single person, many of the works written specifically with his pianistic talents in mind: the op. 97 *Archduke* Piano Trio, the wrist-busting Op. 106 *Hammerclavier* sonata, the mystical and otherworldly C minor sonata, op. 111 as well as the beautiful G major and the E flat major *Emperor* concertos, not to forget the Seventh Symphony and the *Missa Solemnis*. It was Rudolph who, with two of Beethoven's other aristocratic patrons, the Princes Ferdinand Kinsky and Joseph Franz Maximilian Lobkowitz, provided a 4,000 florins-a-year stipend to keep Beethoven in Vienna, and ward off an offer from Bonaparte's brother, Jerome, for the composer to become Kapellmeister at the Westphalian court, where the lesser Bonaparte had been installed as king.

The Sonata op. 81a is, like the *Pastoral Symphony*, one of Beethoven's very few "programmatic" works: in this case musically depicting Rudolph's departure and absence from and return to Vienna, the work being composed sequentially as the depicted events unfolded. Like the Sixth Symphony, the main concern of the writing is a description of feelings evoked by events; in this case by the absence and eventual return of this particular patron of Beethoven's who, almost alone among all his aristocratic benefactors enjoyed consistently smooth and untroubled relations with the notoriously difficult composer. Beethoven was very particular about the titles he chose for the three movements of this work: he was quite unhappy with the French version of the title *Lebewohl* as *Les Adieux*, bestowed by the Leipzig publisher *Breitkopf & Härtel* in 1810. As he pointed out, to a German the expression *Lebewohl* means something much more private and intimate: the kind of thing you might say to a departing friend, rather than the more formally grandiose French title, which might be used as a public farewell to a large

group, or to, for example a town or city. In the score the syllables *Le-be-wohl* appear above the first three chords, forming a motto with their reminiscences of distant hunting horns, a common 19th musical symbol evoking nostalgia or longing (and with the further association with hunting symbolism – the pastime of royalty). The horn imagery re-appears throughout the movement, reinforcing the aural symbol that announces the work.

The second movement, *Andante espressivo*, in C minor takes a series of short themes through various key centers, displaying an internalized and private sorrow at the absence. A final bridge passage leads to the *Wiedersehen*, or reunion, given the unusual Italian tempo designation *Vivacissimamente*; this movement a fully-fledged essay in sonata form, complete with added coda.

Sonata in E minor/Major, op. 90

In the wake of Beethoven's 1814 revision of his sole opera, *Fidelio*, complete with new overture in an entirely different key (E major) from its three previous overtures (all in C major), the compositional innovations he introduced found further fruit in various other contemporaneous works, including the piano sonata under consideration here. Beethoven's revisions to *Fidelio* resulted in an opera that was leaner, more direct, less repetitive and dramatically tighter and more coherent than its earlier self. Lewis

Lockwood describes it as constituting "a laboratory for transforming his style at the level of phrase organization and operatic formal structure." What Beethoven learned through this attempt to render his sole opera dramatically coherent and musically economical, while increasing its emphasis on the lyrical, flowed into his other compositions as well, and this sonata, as the first instrumental composition written after the revision of the opera, displays, as Lockwood puts it, some of its "first results".

The dedication of this sonata to Prince Moritz von Lichnowsky was designed, as Tovey puts it, to rally

> *"that nobleman on the occasion of his engagement. Qualms were alleged to be represented in the vehemently pathetic first movement. It was with no intention of throwing light on that movement that Beethoven called it "a contest between head and heart." Even a patron with an august lack of humour would have seen that this title was a joke; and, in fact, Beethoven's patrons cheerfully endured gibes from him in far worse taste. The gibe in this case is a charming piece of raillery; for the whole point of the sonata lies in the contrast between a movement full of lonely and passionate energy and a movement devoted to the utmost luxuriance of lyric melodies developed in Rondo form. The passion and energy are noble; and in the Rondo the toil is rewarded and the loneliness becomes a tale of long ago. "Happy Conversation with the Beloved" was Beethoven's unofficial title for the Rondo, and in this title Beethoven turns from raillery to modestly smiling congratulation."*

By dedicating his new sonata to Moritz von Lichnowsky, whom he had known since his earliest days in Vienna, along with his brother Carl – the autograph manuscript is dated August 16, 1814 – Beethoven was honoring one of his staunchest and most long-suffering patrons, relations with whom somehow remained intact as the composer became more isolated, difficult and irascible, with his deafness and general decline in health accelerating throughout the last fifteen years of his life. For the first time the movement titles – now depictions of mood rather than tempo –

were provided in German only (a nationalistic advance on the bilingual titles of op. 81a, probably (as Tovey suggests) an indication of the post-Napoleonic disenchantment with romance languages in German-speaking countries. The two movements that comprise op. 90 offer a study in contrasts – the first, to paraphrase Charles Rosen: an impassioned, despairing and even "laconic, almost to the point of reticence" essay in the contrasting use of the piano's high and low registers – even within the same phrase, a pointer to Beethoven's later use of the extremes of the newly expanded piano compass: highest against lowest, with little or nothing in between. The second movement, Tovey's "fulfillment" and Beethoven's "Conversations" is an outpouring of almost endless, lyrical melody, perhaps the longest and (dare one say it) the most repetitive he ever wrote. The new-found concern with brevity and conciseness evident in his sole opera in no way prevents him from waxing lyrically at length in the sonata composed in its immediate wake.

Sonata in A major, op. 101

It is this work that opens the door to what we can identify easily as Beethoven's "late" period – greater technical and musical demands than before, experimentation with new textures and an exploration of tonal juxtapositions and ambiguities that must have surprised even those contemporaries who had followed his career up to this point. Op. 101 is challenging in a directly technical way, especially in its exploration of a high level of elaborate counterpoint – far beyond what would have been considered good taste during the "Enlightenment", and paving the way for Beethoven's great contrapuntal essays in the sonatas opp. 110 and 106. Much of the technique required to play op. 101 is similar to that needed for J. S. Bach's contrapuntal writing – independence and strength of fingers and a keen sense of linear counterpoint.

In its opening movement the clear contours of sonata form – exposition, development and recapitulation – appear to be absorbed into a more amorphous two-part

format; the first incorporating the exposition and development, while the second presents recapitulation and coda blended into a single entity. The normal first and second thematic groups seem blurred, truncated even, and perhaps the work is best understood on some level as a kind of improvisational fantasy.

The remaining movements, too, show Beethoven tweaking the accepted order of things as well as their tonal relationships. He places the dotted-rhythm march in the distant flat key of F major second (as he does the scherzo of the ninth symphony of 1824), and follows it with a reflective slow movement (marked "slowly and with longing"). At the end of the third movement the opening theme of the first movement reappears, to act as a bridge to the high-spirited finale. Counterpoint informs the bulk of this fourth movement, united now with a densely-composed sonata format. Its first theme appears in imitative double counterpoint in a kind of *stretto*, as the voices overlap one another, while the entire development section is cast as a fugue in A minor, with a seven-bar subject derived from the opening imitative figure. The recapitulation of the opening material is interrupted near the end by a brief return of the A minor fugal subject before coming to a triumphant close in A major.

In the last three sonatas, opp. 109 – 111 (available performed by Penelope Crawford on *Musica Omnia* MO 0308) of Beethoven's "sonata laboratory" Baroque forms such as fantasia, fugue (both "real" and in inversion) and variation are each explored in direct and profound ways, ending this journey almost as far as can be imagined from its beginning.

-Peter Watchorn

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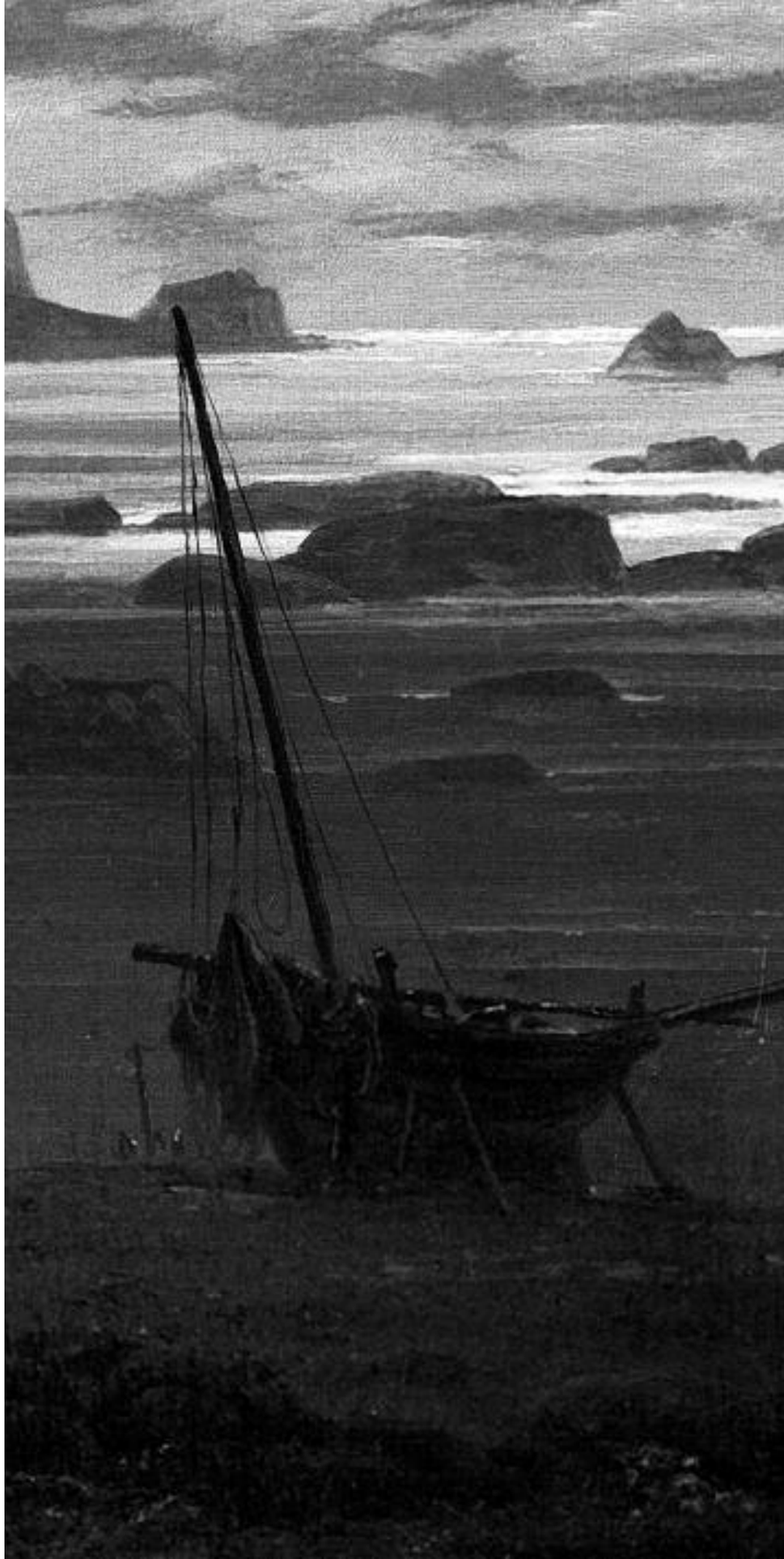

Piano by Conrad Graf, 1835